

THE SCARCE SWALLOW-TAIL:
IPHICLIDES PODALIRIUS (L.) IN BRITAIN

By RONALD S. WILKINSON*

II: Haworth's *Prodromus* and *Lepidoptera Britannica*

In the initial part of this survey of recorded captures and sightings of *podalirius* in Britain (Wilkinson, 1975), I discussed the very meager evidence of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. John Ray reported in the posthumous *Historia Insectorum* (1710) that "in *Etruria* invenimus, atque etiam, ni male memini, in Anglia"; he had encountered *podalirius* during his Italian travels in the 1660s, and also, unless his memory failed, in his home island. John Berkenhout was more decisive in the first volume of his *Outlines of the Natural History of Great Britain and Ireland* (1769); *podalirius* was indeed a British insect, "Rare, in woods." Berkenhout's unsubstantiated statement was perpetuated in second (1789) and third (posthumous, 1795) editions. Haworth eventually suggested a possible source for the assertion.

Although no authentic or even supposed British specimens were known to the community of aurelians as the new century approached, the London naturalists were spurred on to find *podalirius* by their reading of such contemporary writers as Donovan and Lewin, who perpetuated the hope of its capture. Much had been learned about the lepidopterous fauna, but this knowledge was chiefly about the environs of London and the southeastern counties, and naturalists were very aware that little of the rest of Britain had been entomologically explored. One such view was that of the jeweller and collector John Francillon who wrote in 1785 to the Manchester manufacturer John Leigh Philips in hopes of securing native *podalirius*, *virgaureae*, *daplidice*, *palaeno*, *lathonia* and other gems, arguing that "as you are at such a great Distance from London, I think you must meet with specimens we have not got . . . as I find if I go only 20 or 30 miles from London I am sure to meet with something new, therefore I think my argument holds good the further the Distance" (British Library, Add. Mss. 29533, f. 63v.) The climate of opinion was enthusiastic indeed in the golden age of British entomology; surely in time *podalirius* and other desirable insects would be traced to their haunts in those vast areas distant from the metropolis.

But not until the publications of Adrian Hardy Haworth was fresh evidence introduced to suggest that *podalirius* really could be found in Britain. Haworth (1768-1833) was an accomplished botanist whose collateral pursuit of entomology led to the foundation of the third Aurelian Society and the publication of a checklist as well as a classic study of the British Lepidoptera. His seemingly curious treatment of the Scarce Swallow-tail in *Prodromus Lepidopterorum Britannicorum* (1802) and *Lepidoptera Britannica*

*The American Museum of Natural History, New York City, New York 10024.

(1803[-28]) is explained by the complicated printing history of these titles. In the text of the *Prodromus*, *podalirius* is among the asterisked species which Haworth had "not yet absolutely seen alive," but the species name was not printed in italics, as were those "desiderata to the cabinet" of British insects belonging to the Aurelian Society. Perhaps the reason is typographical; *podalirius*, as the first entry in the check-list, has its name in large and small capitals.

In fact we know that the Aurelian Cabinet did not have a supposed British *podalirius*. While the main text of the *Prodromus* was in press, Haworth obtained so much additional information that an addendum with a preface of its own was printed and added to the primary check-list. Haworth explained that in the interim "Real British specimens of the whole [list] have been recently and carefully examined . . . except only Pap. *Podalirius* and Bomb. *Pinus*, which are admitted upon the assurance of two . . . Entomological friends, that they once beheld alive and at large both of these rarities in Britain."

At that time Haworth was well along in the writing of the first volume of *Lepidoptera Britannica*. When the volume was published in 1803, the textual entry for *podalirius* (which had, according to Haworth, been printed some time before) did not include such an assurance by entomological friends. Haworth referred only to the two classical references to *podalirius* as British: "Exemplarium absolute Britannicum nunquam vidi. Locus in *Lepidoptera Britannica* autoritatibus Berkenhouti et Raii (quae ultima satis ambigua est) praecipue pendet" (p. 6.) But Haworth was able to add new and welcome information before the volume was issued. In the preface, sent to the press last and dated July 1803, he announced that "Since the body of this work was printed, my friend the Rev. Dr. Abbott of Bedford has informed me that he took in *May* last, near Clapham Park Wood in Bedfordshire, a specimen of *Papilio Podalirius* in the winged state: and that he also took in *June* last, in White Wood near Gamlingay, Cambridgeshire, the *Papilio Daphidice* (in a faded state) and likewise *Papilio Lathonia*. These are three extremely interesting species, and there is not a British specimen of any of them now extant, except the above.

"*Podalirius* . . . has not been seen alive in Britain, since the time of Ray; unless Berkenhout possessed it, which he probably might, because I have heard of his giving a high price for a rare *Swallow-tail Papilio*, said to be taken in Cambridgeshire, which was probably the identical specimen of *Podalirius* that he has described in his *Synopsis* . . .

"An ingenious and practical Aurelian friend has informed me that he took *two sorts of swallow-tailed Papilios*, near Beverley in Yorkshire, five-and-twenty years ago, but no specimens of them are now extant; a fire which unhappily destroyed great part of his property, having consumed them likewise. Now, as we have only two swallow-tailed species in Great Britain, one of the above in all probability was *Podalirius*. I know *Machaon* . . . breeds near Beverley yet . . ." (Haworth, 1803, xxvi-xxvii.)

Haworth's fortunate friend "the Rev. Dr. Abbott" was Charles Abbot (1761?-1817), cleric and sometime Fellow of New College, Oxford, who took the degree of D. D. in 1802. Like Haworth, Abbot was a botanist and Fellow of the Linnean Society; his *Flora Bedfordiensis* was published in 1798. An Abbot specimen of *podalirius* is still extant, in the Dale Collection, Hope Department of Zoology (Entomology), University Museum, Oxford. It is in somewhat poor condition, with antennae missing, and is labelled "Clapham Park wood May — 1803? Nr. Bedford Dr. Abbot? Mus. Abbot" in the hand of James Charles Dale (1792-1872), a respected figure in nineteenth-century British entomology (Walker, 1907). The question marks imply that at some time Dale had doubts about the provenance of the insect which he obtained as part of Abbot's cabinet (purchased in 1817: Dale, 1830).

The Abbot specimen is the only *podalirius* in the Dale Collection, which was bequeathed by Charles William Dale to Oxford with the diaries and records kept by his father and himself. One of the manuscripts mentions the capture. J. C. Dale compiled an "entomological calendar" from Abbot's original notes (Walker, 1907), and I am informed by Miss Pamela Gilbert, British Museum (Natural History), that the page containing the records for 1803 includes the entry "May-? Papilio Podalirius? Clapham-Park wood Bed's —." Again those troublesome question marks appear. The elder Dale seems to have had no problems with the attribution of Abbot's 1803 capture of *daplidice* and *lathonia*; the specimens are in the Dale Collection ex Abbot, and bear Dale labels without question marks (Walker, 1907). Perhaps Abbot had not specifically labelled his *podalirius* as being the May 1803 capture described to Haworth.

At any rate, in late 1838 or early 1839 Dale assured Peter Rylands that he then possessed the Abbot *podalirius* to which Haworth referred, "a ♀ not in very fine order" (Rylands, 1839), presumably the same specimen now in the Dale Collection. And Dale, one of the more knowledgeable collectors of the period, cited the Abbot capture as part of the extensive information about *podalirius* which he furnished to Rylands and which the latter claimed would "convince any *unbiased* person that *podalirius* ought to be entered in the British Fauna." Rylands (1839) also revealed that "Mr. Haworth told Mr. Dale that 'Dr. Abbott had informed him [Haworth] by letter of his having *seen podalirius two or three times*' previous to the capture."

There is no reason to suppose that Charles Abbot's claims were spurious — or, to phrase that conclusion in a more guarded manner, we have no evidence that he deceived his entomological friends. Certainly he recorded a number of Lepidoptera which were considered exceptional prizes, and all within a relatively brief period of time; his good fortune was not limited to the capture of *podalirius*, *daplidice* and *lathonia* (Haworth, 1802, 1803). However Abbot was considered to be a trustworthy naturalist, and his colleagues called attention to his successes as examples of the progress of British entomology. One may argue that those were more credulous times, in which entomologists accepted one another's records without the

more careful scrutiny which would characterize the Victorian era. That was often true, but even so, Abbot must be considered innocent in the absence of proof to the contrary; and, as we shall see, a number of other collectors quite certainly did take *podalirius* in England after his death.

In his 1803 preface, Haworth chose not to name the "ingenious and practical Aurelian friend" who captured "*two sorts of swallow-tailed Papilios*" near Beverley, Yorkshire a quarter of a century before. But he continued to believe his friend's account; writing of *podalirius*, Samouelle (1819) reported that "Mr. Haworth is yet in hopes of receiving indigenous specimens from Yorkshire." Haworth returned to the subject of *podalirius* in 1828 when preparing a postscript to be published with the sheets of the fourth part of *Lepidoptera Britannica*, which had been printed a number of years before. *Inter alia*, Haworth related that "Mr. Rippon of York has informed the writer that he saw the wing of a *P. Podalirius* found in Yorkshire" (p. 588.)

Rippon's identity has been a mystery until now, and indeed he has led two historians (the late P. B. M. Allan and myself) on a merry chase. He appears in the recently discovered manuscript 'articles of incorporation' of Haworth's Aurelian Society as "John Rippon, Precentor's Court, York," the twelfth Aurelian to sign the document. So quite probably John Rippon was the "Aurelian friend," and he certainly was the Rippon of the *podalirius* wing. J.C. Dale (1830) credited the Beverley captures and the account of the wing to "Mr. Ripon?" several years before Haworth's death, and we may suppose that Dale was not corrected by his old friend, for Rylands (1839) unhesitatingly named "Mr. Rippon, of York" as the collector at Beverley, *ca.* 1778, and one suspects from the first paragraph of Rylands' paper that he had his information from Dale. The circumstances of the supposed captures were repeated again and again in the literature, but the actual facts are scanty enough. We now know Rippon's given name and address, but nothing has been discovered about his collecting activities and the specimens which were consumed by fire. Hopefully a search of local records will reveal more.¹

By the time Haworth wrote his 1828 postscript he was able to record several more captures of *podalirius*. These properly belong to a third part of this survey, which will begin with the curious adventures of the Rev. Frederick William Hope and conclude at mid-century.

¹John Rippon of York was not John Rippon, D. D. (1751-1836), Baptist divine and compiler of the famous collection of hymns, who served his London parish for nearly 64 years and who appears in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Our Rippon was not Precentor of York Minster, and the Dean of York, who graciously conducted a search of the appropriate records, discovered no official affiliation with the Minster. Precentor's Court, earlier called Precentor's Lane, opens into High Petergate, and evidently Rippon occupied one of the private residences in the Court.

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THE BRIMSTONE: GONEPTERYX RHAMNI L. APPARENTLY IMBIBING AT HYDRANGEA FLOWERS. — On September 6th, 1980, I was surprised to see a female brimstone butterfly alight upon a sterile flower of the head of a Hortensis type *Hydrangea* with pale blue flowers, and probe for some time the calyx tube. This behaviour was repeated on several flower heads before the insect moved on to the bright pink flowers provided by a hedge of *Lathyrus latifolius*, the everlasting pea, which over the years has been noted as the most favoured flower attraction for this species here in my garden. Two days later the visits were repeated.

So far as I am aware *Hydrangea* flowers of this type do not produce nectar, neither were the flowers wet, nor host to aphides. Work by D. Ilse quoted in *The Pollination of Flowers* by Proctor and Yeo, 1973, showed that the brimstone's natural flower preference was for those coloured blue, and that approach was visual rather than olfactory.

This explains the visit to the *Hydrangea*, but what is not clear are its lengthy visits with apparent feeding. Regarding colour selectivity, violet and purple are also attractive to the brimstone, according to Ilse, while few visits are made to red, orange and yellow flowers. In my garden another pink flower commonly attracting the brimstone is *Sedum spectabile*, although I associate this more with *Aglaia urticae*, the small tortoiseshell, which Ilse finds most attracted by flowers of yellow or blue colouration, and which also use a visual approach — B. K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Bexley, Kent.